

American Diabetes Month

Written by Utah Department of Health

Wednesday, 19 November 2008 17:00 - Last Updated Monday, 23 March 2009 15:21

Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin. Insulin is a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life. About 1.5 million Americans a year are diagnosed with diabetes, and hundreds of thousands more develop the disease but go undiagnosed. Understanding your risk factors can help you prevent certain types of diabetes.



Are you at risk? Here are some diabetes risk factors:

- You have a parent or sibling with diabetes
- You are African-American, Hispanic American or Native-American
- You are 45 or older
- You get little or no daily exercise
- You are overweight
- You have an expanding waistline
- Your triglycerides are elevated
- You have high blood pressure

Some of these risk factors are uncontrollable. Age, race, sex, and family history cannot be changed. However, there are also many diabetes risk factors that can be reduced, including diet, weight, level of activity and stress. If you are at higher risk, then take charge and make changes to the things that are within your control. You don't have to knock yourself out to prevent diabetes. The key is small steps that lead to big rewards.

Lifestyle habits usually are passed from parents to children. By maintaining a lifestyle with a healthy diet and exercise, you're not only helping yourself, but you're also helping future generations.

To help delay or prevent diabetes, people should:

- Reach and maintain a healthy body weight
- Choose a good diet - high in fiber and low in fat; also, remember to watch portion

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size--how much you eat is just as important as what you eat.

- Be active and exercise regularly - any amount of activity is better than none, but try to exercise for 30 to 60 minutes most days of the week.
- Control blood pressure and cholesterol
- Avoid smoking
- Limit use of alcohol
- Manage stress